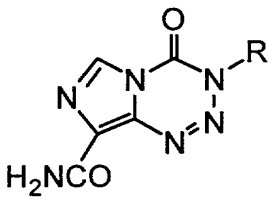
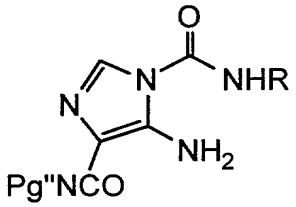
CLAIMS:

1. A process for the preparation of a compound of the formula:



wherein R is an alkyl group having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms, which comprises:

(a) diazotizing a compound of the formula:



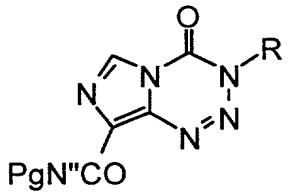
II,

wherein R is as defined above;

and Pg" is a divalent protecting group that is readily removable by hydrolysis or hydrogenolysis; or two monovalent protecting groups Pg that are readily removable by hydrolysis or hydrogenolysis; or a bulky monovalent protecting group Pg that is readily removable by hydrolysis or hydrogenolysis, together with a hydrogen atom;

and thereafter

(b) hydrolyzing the resulting compound of the formula:



III.

2. A process as claimed in Claim 1 wherein R is a straight-chain alkyl group having from 1 to 4 carbon atoms.

3. A process as claimed in Claim 1 wherein R is a methyl group.

4. A process as claimed in Claim 3 wherein Pg" is a monovalent protecting group together with a hydrogen atom.

5. A process as claimed in Claim 4 wherein the monovalent protecting group is a 1,1-dimethylethyl group.

6. A process as claimed in Claim 5 wherein step (a) is carried out in solution in an aqueous organic acid with a source of nitrous acid.

7. A process as claimed in Claim 6 wherein the organic acid is acetic acid and the source of nitrous acid is inorganic.

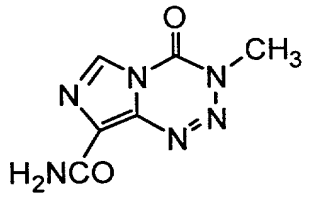
8. A process as claimed in Claim 7 wherein the source of nitrous acid is sodium nitrite.

9. A process as claimed in Claim 8 wherein the reaction is carried out in the presence of LiCl.

10. A process as claimed in Claim 5 wherein step (b) is carried out by hydrolysis with a mineral acid.

11. A process as claimed in Claim 10 wherein the mineral acid is concentrated sulfuric acid.

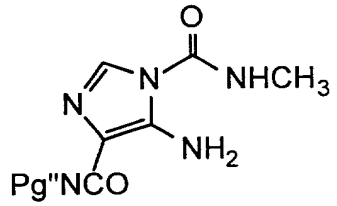
12. A process as claimed in Claim 1 for the preparation of Temozolomide having the formula:



I,

which comprises

(a) diazotizing a compound of the formula:

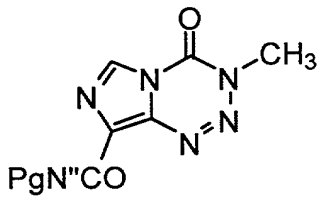


II,

wherein Pg" is a divalent protecting group that is readily removable by hydrolysis or hydrogenolysis; or two monovalent protecting groups Pg that are readily removable by hydrolysis or hydrogenolysis; or a bulky monovalent protecting group Pg that is readily removable by hydrolysis or hydrogenolysis, together with a hydrogen atom;

and thereafter

(b) subjecting the resulting compound of the formula:



III,

wherein Pg" is as defined above, to hydrolysis or hydrogenolysis.

13. A process as claimed in claim 12 wherein the protecting group Pg" is a 1,1-dimethylethyl group together with a hydrogen atom, the diazotization is effected in solution in acetic acid with sodium nitrite and in the presence of LiCl;

and step (b) is carried out by hydrolysis with concentrated sulfuric acid.

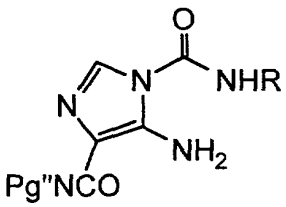
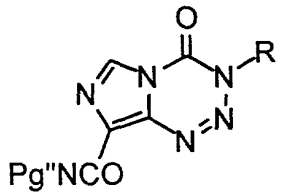
14. A process as claimed in claim 1 wherein the compound of the formula II is prepared by reaction of a compound of the formula Pg"N.CO.CH(NH_2).CN (V) (wherein Pg" is a protecting group as defined in claim 1) with methyl[[[(methyl-amino)carbonyl]amino]methylene]urea or with N-methylurea and an orthoformate in an inert organic solvent.

15. A process as claimed in claim 14 wherein the compound of the formula V is prepared by hydrolysis of a compound of the formula Pg"N.CO.CH(N:Ar).CN (VI) (wherein Pg is as defined in claim 14 and Ar is an arylmethylene group) with mild acid.

16. A process as claimed in claim 15 wherein Pg is a 1,1-dimethylethyl group together with a hydrogen atom, and Ar is a diphenylmethylene group.

17. A process as claimed in claim 15 wherein the compound of the formula VI wherein Pg is a 1,1-dimethylethyl group together with a hydrogen atom and Ar is a diphenylmethylene group is prepared by condensation of [(diphenylmethylene)amino]acetonitrile with 1,1-dimethylethylisocyanate.

18. A compound of the formula:

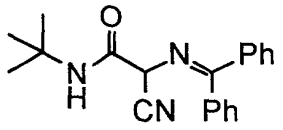

II,

III,

Pg"N.CO.C(:NOH).CN IV,
Pg"N.CO.CH(NH_2).CN V,
or
Pg"N.CO.CH(N:Ar).CN VI,

wherein Pg" is a protecting group that is readily removable by hydrolysis as defined in claim 1, Ar is an arylmethylene group, and R is an alkyl group having from 1 to 6 carbon atoms;
together with the salts thereof.

19. A compound as claimed in Claim 18 wherein Pg is a 1,1-dimethylethyl group together with a hydrogen atom, Ar is a diphenylmethylene group, and R is an alkyl group having from 1 to 4 carbon atoms.

20. A compound as claimed in Claim 18 having the formula: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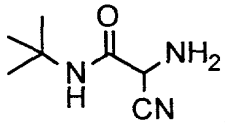
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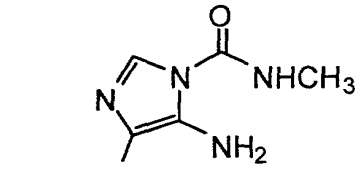
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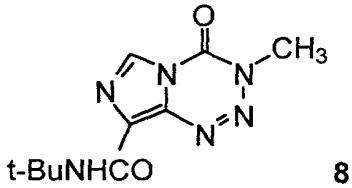
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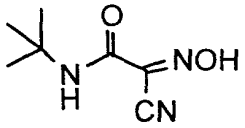
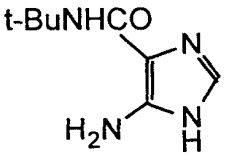

13, or

17.

21. A process for the preparation of a compound having the formula III set forth in Claim 1, which comprises diazotizing a compound of the formula II set forth in Claim 1.

22. A process for the preparation of a compound having the formula II set forth in Claim 1, which comprises reacting a compound of the formula Pg"N.CO.CH(NH_2).CN (V) with a compound of the formula R.NH.CO.NH.CH:N.CO.NH.R or with an N-R-urea and an orthoformate in an inert organic solvent (wherein Pg" is a protecting group as defined in claim 1 and R is as defined in Claim 1).

23. A process as claimed in Claim 22, which comprises reacting a compound of the formula *t*-BuNH.CO.CH(NH_2).CN with methyl[[[(methylamino)carbonyl]-amino]methylene]urea or with N-methylurea and an orthoformate in an inert organic solvent.

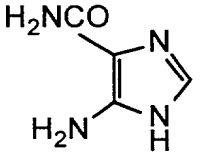
24. A process for the preparation of a compound having the formula Pg"N.CO.CH(NH_2).CN (V), which comprises hydrolyzing a compound of the formula Pg"N.CO.CH(N:Ar).CN (VI) (wherein Pg" is a protecting group that is readily removable by hydrolysis as defined in claim 1, and Ar is an arylmethylene group) with mild acid.

25. A process for the preparation of a compound having the formula VI set forth in Claim 18 wherein Pg is a 1,1-dimethylethyl group and Ar is a diphenylmethylene group, which comprises the condensation of [(diphenylmethylene)amino]acetonitrile with 1,1-dimethylethylisocyanate.

26. The acid addition salts of the compounds of the formulae **4**, **5**, **6**, **8**, and **17** defined in claim 20.

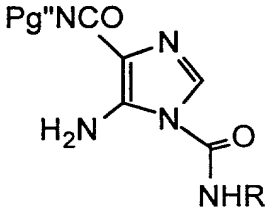
27. The salts with bases of the compound of the formula **13** defined in claim 20.

28. A process for the preparation of the compound of the formula

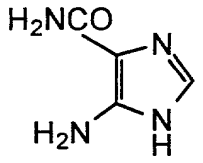


or an acid addition salt thereof,

which comprises hydrolyzing, or hydrogenolyzing and hydrolyzing, a compound of the formula

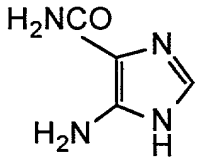


(wherein Pg" and R are as defined in claim 1), and isolating the resulting compound of the formula



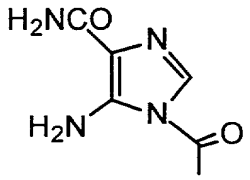
or an acid addition salt thereof.

29. A process for the preparation of a compound of the formula

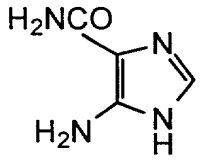


or an acid addition salt thereof,

which comprises condensing a compound of the formula $H_2N.CO.CH(NH_2).CN$ with a compound of the formula R.NH.CO.NH.CH:N.CO.NH.R or with an N-R-urea and an orthoformate in an inert organic solvent (wherein R is as defined in Claim 1), hydrolyzing the resulting compound of the formula

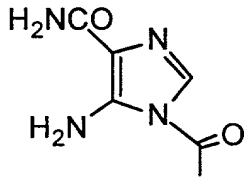


(wherein R is as defined in Claim 1), and isolating the resulting compound of the formula



or an acid addition salt thereof.

30. A process for the preparation of a compound of the formula



wherein R is as defined in Claim 1,

which comprises condensing a compound of the formula $H_2N.CO.CH(NH_2).CN$ with a compound of the formula R.NH.CO.NH.CH:N.CO.NH.R or with an N-R-urea and an orthoformate in an inert organic solvent (wherein R is as defined in Claim 1).